

ROSEVILLE LEGEND

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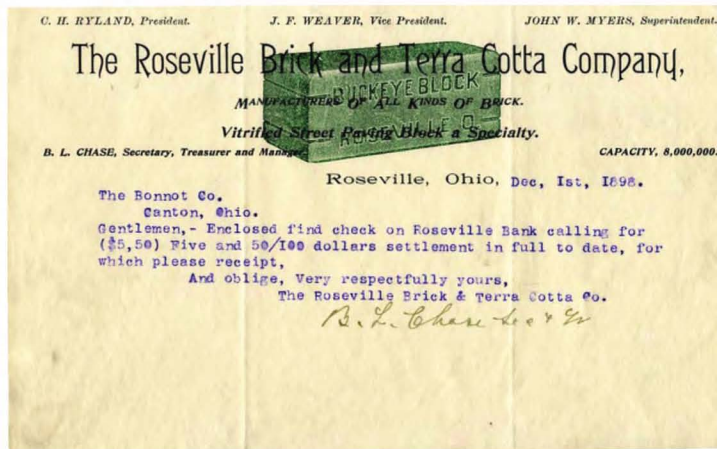
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The Roseville Brick and Terra Cotta Company

By James L. Murphy

Although Roseville, Ohio, has been the location for several brick companies, the first one known to have made paving brick was the **Roseville Brick and Terra Cotta Company**. (Whether it ever made terra cotta as well remains unknown but it is unlikely.) The company was relatively short-lived, incorporated November 17, 1891 (Secretary of State Corporation Records, v. 52, p. 525) and dissolved June 18, 1908, although brick continued to be made on the site by subsequent firms and even the State of Ohio as part of its prison system.

A rare piece of company letterhead indicates that in 1898 the officers of **The Roseville Brick and Terra Cotta Company** were **C.H. Ryland**, **J.F. Weaver**, and **John W. Myers**, with **B.L. Chase** secretary and manager. Myers appears to have been the impetus for the project for he sold the original land to the company in 1891.



The shale pit was directly behind the plant, no more than 50 yards away. The shale was shoveled into cars, run to a tipple, and dumped into a chute. After being crushed and tempered, the clay was carried directly to a Bucyrus brick machine and then an Eagle repress machine. (It is during the repressing that the company and brand name were impressed in the brick.) All bricks manufactured one day were ready for the kiln the next, about 25,000 blocks a day being produced.



Photo left, company letterhead dated 1898. Photo right, Buckeye Block paver brick Roseville O [Photos courtesy of James L. Murphy]

A 1905 note in *Brick and Clay Record* (v. 26, no. 1) indicates that Ryland had been re-elected president; Wigton continued as vice-president; and **J. A. Howell** of Toledo had replaced Chase as secretary-treasurer. That same year the company suffered a fire loss of \$1,000 but it was fully covered by insurance. Census records indicate that Ryland and Wigton were local farmers, so it is likely they served primarily to finance the brick works.

Muskingum County court records show that in October, 1906, **The Roseville Brick & Terra Cotta Co.** was sold at sheriff's sale for \$14,000 to none other than **Benjamin L. Chase**, of Mansfield, Ohio. A certificate of dissolution for the **Buckeye Brick and Terra Cotta Co.** was filed with the Secretary of State June 18, 1908. Two years later the Chases sold the plant to the **Atlas Brick Company**.

In between times (January, 1907), *Brick and Clay Record* reported that the company had been taken over by the **Devonshire Brick and Ceramic Co.** of Columbus, with a completely different roster of officers, with **Warren B. Ferris** (1879-1951), a major Columbus brick manufacturer, as president and **Will Shoemaker** as superintendent. The following month it was also announced that the plant would be converted from manufacturing paving brick to producing face brick and glazed brick, and a year later intentions were to build an electric light plant that would also light the town of Roseville. Whether either plan was carried out remains unknown but it seems unlikely. In February, 1910, Ferris petitioned to have the plant placed in receivership. *Brick and Clay Record* (February 28, 1910) noted that the plant, appraised at \$51,000, "had not been running for some time" and was "the old **Buckeye Paving Brick Co.** plant."

There were other Buckeye brick companies in Ohio, causing some confusion. (A plant at Ellis, Ohio, north of Zanesville, produced pavers marked "Buckeye Block, Ellis, O.") There were even two different Buckeye brick plants in Roseville, for *Brick and Clay Record* (March 29, 1901) notes that according to **H. J. Sheppard**, president of the "**Buckeye Press Brick Co.** near Roseville," the plant was being transferred to the **Ohio Press Brick Co.** This plant was actually east of the **Robinson-Ransbottom Pottery** in Ironspot. Although it does not appear to have ever made paving brick, the other "Buckeye" brick works that are believed to have made paving block were at Wellsville and Wickliffe, Ohio. If and how their products were marked remains unknown.

In April, 1900, the magazine *Brick* provided considerable information, as well as two photographs of the plant, describing it as "one of the sterling institutions of the town of Roseville, O." By this time the original debts had been wiped out and several thousand dollars put into improvements. An eight per cent dividend had been declared in 1899, a year in which the company sold 5,000,000 paving blocks. More than 900 railroad cars were used to transport the brick to Toledo, Mansfield, and both Detroit and Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1900, besides **B.L. Chase**, secretary-treasurer, officers listed as **Thomas Brown**, president, and **John W. Wigton**, vice-president. **Albert Tharp** was superintendent, "a brick man from the word go." It is not known what had become of **John W. Myers**, the original superintendent, other than that he left Roseville around 1915 to live in Elyria.

The 1895 Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. map of the plant shows only nine kilns, three inside the main building; however, by 1900 the plant had eleven beehive downdraft kilns, with plans to construct three more.

